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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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The Hungarians are by no means indifferent to the study of modern languages, as may be gathered from their position, and the composite nature of their population. It is no unusual thing for a Hungarian to be acquainted with English. It may be mentioned also that the distinguished linguist and traveller Arminius Vambéry is a Hungarian.

When we consider the many disadvantages under which Hungary has laboured, its geographical isolation, its late entry upon the path of civilisation, and its political troubles, it may be said on the whole to have done remarkably well. It has confronted the educational problems presented to it with energy and thoroughness. It has long since recognised that education from first to last is the duty of the State. It has shown that the State is well fitted to carry out that duty; and also that difficulties which appears to us so grave are not really formidable when there exists a general desire to promote the cause of education.

To quote the words of Mr. Berzeviczy: "The use of the school is to build up and strengthen the nation. The State wants the very best schools, and, while it values the liberty and noble rivalry of the schools, it desires to secure free scope for the intellectual development of every individual. The ideas, traditions, and aims of the State must be introduced into the school, which, from the lowest to the highest grade, must be convinced of the idea of the State, so that the community, separated by differences of religion, race and social status, may be bound together and formed into a strong nation by the unity of the school."

THE MODERN RELATIONSHIP OF PARENT TO CHILD.

BY THOMAS BABINGTON SUGDEN.

IN selecting a title for the few remarks I have to offer you, I glance back with regret to the custom of a century ago, when, however small the treatise, its author felt justified in setting out a title of portentous length giving a detailed explanation of the contents and intentions of his production, and which always appears to me to bear a strong family likeness to those lengthly classical epitaphs of the same period, which to-day adorn the walls of some of our churches, and were raised, incidentally to the Glory of God, but more particularly to chronicle the transcendent virtues of the many saints who flourished in the age of periwigs, patches, and powder, and the filial piety of their issue. I am by no means satisfied that the title I have selected is the proper label to attach to this paper. I also have to plead my limitations—I am only a parent—therefore trammelled by experience, and the intimate observation of children in their unrestrained natural home-life, a thing frequently quite different from company or even school manners—and also, *therefore*, I am unable to indulge in those bold flights of imagination which endue the theories of those not so hampered with much of their interest and value.

In the first place, I submit to you the simple proposition that the relationship of parent to child has in recent years undergone a considerable modification from bye-gone days; and in the second place, I will venture, with great diffidence, and as briefly as possible, to suggest and discuss the methods which parents should adopt, in order to meet the new situation, and make the home fulfil all its obligations.

There was a time when parents exercised a much greater authority, and expected, and received, much more homage of a formal character than is accorded to them now. The head of the house was indeed the head of the house not only during the

early years of his children, but after they had grown up into mature manhood and womanhood. When the parents entered the room the children rose and stood in their presence. "Sir" and "Madam" were the proper address of respect given to them by their children who "attended on" and "waited on" as they took their airing. Of course, that was an age of ceremony, though the lapse of time has undoubtedly interposed between ourselves and the period, an atmosphere which has imparted to our conception of the original more delicacy and refinement than it really possessed, and we forget that the gay butterflies which flit across the stage of a Sheridan and charm us with the sparkle of their wit and the beauty of their dress, were capable of a coarseness in manner and speech equal to that of the most vulgar smart society of the twentieth century.

But coming to later times—to the early Victorian, now so frequently despised—aye and even to our own childhood's days, are we not conscious of a changed attitude which children now assume to their parents as compared with that in the past? The external marks of respect are now not quite so observable as formerly, the spirit of the age is taking possession of our children betimes. I do not wish to represent this fact in an exaggerated form. I imagine that the natural affection which binds parent to child and child to parent during the early years of their relationship, is a pretty stable factor having much the same value in all times. But I think the present age possesses features peculiar to itself, which are calculated to place in jeopardy what should be the products of natural affection such as parental control, filial obedience, and mutual confidence.

If I am correct in this view, I think that it must be admitted that it is a wise course to adopt if we endeavour to understand what and whence are the currents which are influencing our home-life, and to consider how it may be necessary to modify or adapt our habits of thought and action so as to retain the authority and influence which we believe will conduce to the development of the capacity for usefulness and happiness of those who by nature are thrown together in the little communities which we call home. Perhaps we shall find that those things which may appear necessary to attain these

objects will themselves re-act on us as powerful beneficent agents.

If I were asked to designate the spirit of the age by a symbol, I should adopt the note of interrogation. There is nothing to-day too sacred to be questioned; I hardly like to describe ours as an age of doubt—the term carries with it a sense of prejudice—rather shall we say the age is saturated with the spirit of inquiry. Our most sacred dogmas are being challenged; established authorities, so obvious, as we thought, as Euclid and Free Trade are being threatened, and we do not know how long we may be permitted to take our stand on or by the Law of Gravitation.

Parentage has long enjoyed something approaching an autocracy in the home, and in effect, it seems to me, we are now asked either to justify it, or to modify this to something approaching a Constitutional Monarchy in which the parents *may* rule, in a measure by the suffrages of their subjects. Well, a Constitutional Monarch, with all his limitations, has attained to a truly higher dignity than the greatest autocrat, in that *he* reigns over free and reasonable subjects, the other over serfs.

Various suggestions have been made for the solution of this problem. I have heard a proposition put forward by someone whom I was bound to respect as speaking with authority, that the solution is to be found in the formula that home-life should be based on absolute liberty for each of its members, each feeling free to pursue and develop his or her own individuality without regard to the others, and thus we should rid ourselves of irksome restraints and—I suppose the home would cohere by the force of natural affections.

With profound respect may I say I dissent wholly from such a proposition, however attractive it may appear to some. I will venture to go further: I believe that such experiments are being tried, perhaps unconsciously, in these days, with disastrous results. Have we not known the family in which the father, in the spare time which business allows him devoting his energies and leisure wholly to public affairs—local or imperial—so that the home knows too little of him and his influence. Of course, such fathers are quite aware of the

immense sacrifices they are making, but then the Empire must be saved at all costs, though after all it is not always Empire-saving which swallows up a father's spare time. Then the mother, well, do not "social duties" each year become more exacting? Besides, who so capable in these days in promoting the one hundred and one undertakings for ameliorating the condition of everybody else as a woman.

Between the self-sacrificing lives of such parents, the children in their early years fall to the care of servants, or mother's helps, or governesses, and their parents must appear to their minds as ultimate courts of appeal to whom only the various disagreeable issues of life are referred, and whose sentences alternate between severity and indulgence as may happen to be the temper of the court at the moment. In later years the children find themselves (happily, so they think) free from restraints, and, following faithfully the examples of their parents, pursue their own courses. Then comes the time when parents complain that now the children are grown-up they seem to care very little for their homes and leave their parents to bear, as they can, the loneliness of old age. Perhaps you may think the picture I have drawn rather highly coloured. Modify it, if you please, but the salient features remain. I know that Mrs. Jellyby with her far-away look fixed on Borrioboola-gha still exists, and there are still some parents who need reminding that charity *begins* at home, though unfortunately so many use that phrase to justify never letting the virtue step out into the street.

Between a rule of undue repression on the one hand, which I suggest in this age must lead to rebellion, and licence on the other, either of which extremes is calculated to destroy natural affection and all the virtues which should spring therefrom, there must be a middle course, and to the consideration of what this may be, we will, if you please, next apply ourselves.

I have already suggested that the modern tendency to modify the position of parentage, in its best aspect at any rate, is in the direction of a Constitutional Monarchy, and in the development of this idea, I think, lies the solution of the question. I am not so foolish as to seek to formulate a hard and rigid constitution, but, I think that parents might do

worse than seek to develop home-relationships on the principles of a State and Citizenship, of which the parents are the head by the assent of the affections *and reason* of the community. This is based on a theory opposed absolutely to that which underlies the scheme of unrestrained liberty. Citizenship has as its root principle the sacrifice of a certain amount of individual liberty to the State in return for the enjoyment of the advantages in security, happiness, and other privileges which the State affords. Or the proposition may be cast into a more altruistic form, by saying that citizenship is the surrender for the benefit of the community of that which is the natural possession of the individual. It surely cannot be unwise that the practice of this theory which is necessary to good citizenship in the wider sphere of mature life should first be learned in early years, and within the home circle. *But it must be remembered that the sacrifices involved are reciprocal.*

In seeking to establish ourselves the head of such a state, we parents begin with many immense advantages which should be sufficient to secure success, natural affection and the absolute dependence of our children in their early years being the chief.

It would probably seem a very trite and unnecessary principle to lay down, certainly to the great middle class to which we belong, that parents should live with their children. But it is quite possible for us to live day by day, and year after year in the same home with our children, to meet them at meals and other family gatherings, and yet hardly be able to say in the fullest sense that we live with them. To do this, we need, to a great extent, and so far as possible, to begin our lives over again in them, so as to be in sympathy with the varying stages of their lives, in order to achieve the prime object of our scheme—*their confidence*.

The short period of pure babyhood in their children, which may be said to extend, shall we say, up to the age of four years is, to all properly constituted parents, a period of unmixed delight, presenting few perplexing problems, but then we are rapidly approaching a time when we often hear parents lamenting the fact that their little ones are growing out of babyhood, much in the same way that most people regret when a kitten becomes a sedate cat.

But it is at this first transition stage, when perhaps it is more important than at any other time, that the parent should be certainly in the very fullest sense *living with the child*. How rapidly, and at what an early age, does a human being develop his individuality! Little babyish exhibitions of temper in the three year old assume a much more serious significance in the child of six or seven years. If the child is to be happy in the necessary restraints of home life, finding that they accord with his reason, or are prescribed by the experience of one who has his confidence, it is now that the parent should be on the closest intimacy with the MIND of that child.

I am afraid that we are too often impatient of the attitude of the child's mind in relation to the rules of our little state, rules of which, as we are the authors, we do not probably judge with as little bias as may our children, and are inclined to suppress opposition by a strong arm, thus perhaps calling into existence a secret rebel.

I would not have you think that it is merely in order to win an obedient subject, that I suggest we should live with our children. If that were the predominant idea in our minds, our parentage would present to our children more the features of a tutor. No, we live with them in order to help to develop to the full their capacity for living, with all the happiness that a wholesome souled life must find. This asks some sacrifice on the part of parents? No doubt, some, but do we expect to teach our children to be unselfish and not practise unselfishness ourselves? And after all quite apart from this beneficent re-action *on our own characters* which the attempt to train our children may have, I believe, that the experience of living with our children, *their lives*, not ours, may effect in us a rejuvenescence which will largely increase *our* enjoyment of life.

Take one little example; an average father whose everyday toil is cast in somewhat grey dry-as-dust surroundings, is called on to put on one side the sordid literature of the money market, or of political intrigues, and to read marvellous fairy tales to a little audience, all glittering eyes and cheeks flushed with excitement, and from that lured on to telling a romance "all out of his own head." Why such a man probably finds waking in him once again the faculty, long dormant or almost

dead, of living with delight in that world of romance, where no man has a mean thought and woman's eyes and voice and heart, are true and sweet and pure.

Of course, we recognise that no one can lay down any hard and fast rule for dividing the life of childhood and youth into stages of development. But, may I be understood to speak in general terms when I say that it seems to me there is a very interesting stage between the years of nine and thirteen, when the average child first discovers a capacity for secretiveness and reserve which is the rightful possession of every intelligent human being, and, within certain limits, must be respected even by parents. But this may be developed abnormally unless parents have established beforehand good healthy terms of confidence with their children, and the latter may acquire such a tendency to introspection (good within wholesome limits) as may not only serve to raise a very effectual barrier between parent and child, but will prevent the child from contributing a due share to the common-weal of the home circle, and loosen one of the purest ties with which young man and young woman can face the world. Biography will furnish us with instances of the childhood of imaginative little souls, whom the elders have, even through good-natured carelessness, not credited with a single serious or questioning thought about life seen and unseen, which has in secret been peopled with all sorts of phantasies, some quaint, some sweet, but some too often vain, misleading and morbid, and which have left an indelible mark on the after life. Do we not often look upon little children merely as delightfully intelligent young animals, and, in the dulness which the wear and tear of life has induced in our own faculties, forget they have souls whose intelligences are very receptive, and sensitive to respond to rays of light from the world of imagination which we do not perceive. If only that we may restore to our dim eyes, through the clear sight of childhood, some of the visions which, to our loss, have been long forgotten, it is well for us to try and live our lives over again in our children.

But really the average man will find that to associate with the average boy of say twelve years on the basis of mutual confidence is, to-day, a liberal education for the man, frequently

much more so than if he had spent the same time in adult society. For what do a lot of men talk about when they get together for a social chat? We will assume that they do not talk "shop." Well do the following topics furnish a fairly comprehensive range: the last shoot, or golf, or bridge; the dominant political question with, if it happens to be one of foreign politics, a very guarded reference to localities, because we are a little shaky in our geography; or perhaps it may be local politics; or a so-called religious discussion, the subject of a newspaper correspondence, and we probably all get out of our depth, and *he* is treated with the most respect who poses as a dispassionate critic, having himself no individual responsibility in the matter at all, but who considers the whole question from a superior and detached standpoint. If we are honest enough to make such a humiliating confession before ladies, have we derived any appreciable permanent value from the whole discussion?

And, what do ladies talk about when they get together? I do not know, and will not be so rash as to give the reins to my imagination. But, remember, when a father talks with his son of twelve (and this applies to the daughter equally) he is conversing with a product (not finished I admit) of modern education. And what is that product? Is it not a human mind whose natural inquisitiveness has been stimulated and developed on intelligent lines, and furnished with so much information as to make it voracious for more? Fortunately, as a rule, nature is capable of maintaining a true balance with other faculties.

I am permitted to illustrate my point by the actual experience of a father and son, of whom, as their anonymity is to be preserved, I may say, that they are quite ordinary everyday individuals with no exceptional intelligence.

On the occasion of an afternoon walk in the country, not at all undertaken with an eye to a *Sandford and Merton* promenade, and in which there was the natural frolic of the fields because the two were on terms of mutual confidence, the *son* led the father into conversation on the following topics: concrete, its manufacture, the construction of Roman roads, meteorites, earthquakes, volcanoes, the manufacture of alum from coal shale, and aniline dyes and saccharine

from coal tar; and finally shocked the parent's sense of propriety by reciting some very modern and painfully simple definitions of lines, straight lines, angles, etc., which to the older man seemed strangely lacking in the dignity and soul-satisfying qualities of that ancient determination of a point as that which hath no parts, and which hath no magnitude. The father told me that he never realised before that afternoon, how very indefinite and slight his knowledge was on subjects the names of which he had dared to treat with an approach to familiarity. The sequel to the walk was the spectacle of father and son poring over six or eight volumes of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Please do not allow yourselves to be prejudiced against that boy. He was neither a prodigy, nor a prig, but just an ordinary boy, not abnormally fond of school or lessons, and you will find dozens of the same in any grammar or other school in this country.

I hope I have established by what I have said, that the association most intimately with our children in their childhood has advantages for ourselves, which far outbalance any little sacrifice we may have to make. It is evident, that it must tend to strengthen the ties of natural affection and mutual confidence. And it will, I believe, establish the parents in their rightful position of *rulers* of the state by the suffrages of their subjects, who recognise in them the essentials of popular rule, the power to protect, experience, and sympathy.

If this were all we had in contemplation, it would be possible to rest very well content, for our homes have become a centre round which the thoughts of young men and young women will gravitate when they have gone out into the world to meet, with a youth's zest for combat, the vicissitudes of fortune. Thither will be sent the first news of success, and if defeat must come, as in most lives it comes a salutary discipline, no sympathy will be so assured as that of the old folk who are living, still living over again their own early struggles in those of their children. We might still rest content for we have preserved sacred for us all, the holiest human relationship in this life which is enshrined in the name of "mother." And though we fathers know ourselves designated, in light moments, by some title the equivalent in the fashion of the days to come to the "governor" of to-day, yet, if at the same time we are

assured that in these sturdy young hearts we hold a place which will make them seek us as their most certain confidants in the serious moments of their lives, we can well afford an indulgent smile at the innocent exuberance of a healthy youth, remembering that we also were once young.

But the work of the parents is not confined in its fruits within the narrow limits of the home circle, nor merely to the maintenance of intimate and affectionate confidences between its members. The training of citizenship in our little state with its lessons, the better taught if taught unconsciously by example, of self-restraint, self-denial, and the higher happiness which is enjoyed in conceding the rights of others to be happy and ourselves contributing thereto, is the function of all others which parents should jealously guard as primarily their privilege; and theirs too the privilege, as the children grow in years, to extend the range of this spirit of citizenship in widening circles until it embraces the great fact, not as a piece of spread-eagleism but as a sobering fact bringing with its glory the sense of responsibility and calling out the best in man and woman, that the real inheritance of the Englishman is the citizenship of the widest spread *Christian Empire* (giving each word all the fulness of its value) the world knows. It is a great claim, it is a living fact, the fruit of which we enjoy in a thousand ways. It is a great privilege and a great responsibility for parents to instil into their children a true appreciation of this fact, and one of which I cannot see that we may divest ourselves without a serious breach of trust. The most woeful thing of all would be if in regard to that, *which is a fact, and of which we can on occasion make such loud professions*, parents by their own conduct should teach their children their first lesson in hypocrisy, and at the same time lead them into the fallacy which suggests that the whole thing is one of profession only, and at the best an innocent sentimentalism.

View our Empire, if you will, with the limited vision of the politician who sees in it merely a world power possessing the elements of expansion, aggression, and dissolution; or of the merchant who sees in it only a general asset which means for him the possibilities of individual wealth; or seek to adjust more truly your comprehension of its proportions in relation to externals, by conceiving it but an organism, or an organism

within an organism, in the great unity of the universe—so vast and yet less than that Infinite, Who at once contains and pervades it, Whose strength is manifest in the great powers of Nature, in the tiny eddy the raindrop makes in the wayside pool, in the feeble yet strenuous pulsations of the heart of that little bird you hold captive in your hand, in the myriad forms of life around us, of which, unaided by science, we have no perception; yet this fact remains, whatever the view: our homes are the nerve centres of the great corporate body of the Empire, and as they are filled with wholesome, sweet, unselfish loving lives, so only will the Empire be strong, vigorous, and cohesive in the binding power of a loyal citizenship, made worthy by those qualities of which let the poet speak:—

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncalled for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."